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THE
COTTAGE:
A
NOVEL.



THE
COTTAGE;
A

NOVEL.

In a Series of Letters

By Miss M. A. B. B.

Author of BARFORD ABBEY

IN THREE VOLUMES.



L O N D O N :

Printed by T. DUNHAM, Chancery-Lane, G. K. R. A. S. Y.
Ludgate-Street, St. Bride's, in Paternoster-Row,
and F. BLYTH, No. 27, Cornhill.

1769.

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By Miss MINIFIE,
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VOL. II.



L O N D O N :

Printed for T. DURHAM, Charing-Cross; G. KEARSLY,
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NOVEMBER

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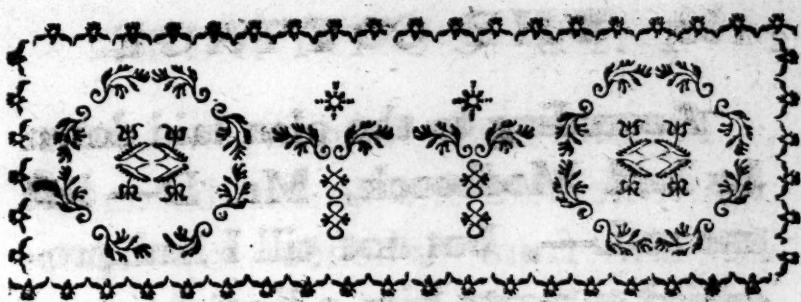
By Mrs. M. J. R.
Author of "The Cottage"

IN THREE VOLUMES

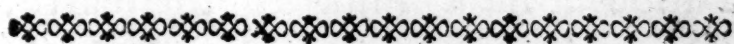


LONDON:
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1799



THE
COTTAGE.



I GOT home about seven o'clock, and was agreeably surprized to be received at the chariot door by my uncle, with the highest marks of tenderness; but the visible alteration in his countenance alarmed me.

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B

I could

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I could not restrain my tears when he held me to his bosom—he saw from whence my tears flowed—he said many affectionate things to abate my concern, and I flattered myself, the *parent* stood confessed in every feature.

Before I could enter the house, Mrs. Abington and her son came running to welcome me—I thought I should have sunk to the earth, when they approached—I shuddered and turned pale, as my uncle led me towards them. What can be so dreadful as the embraces of an hypocrite?

Mrs. Abington kissed me again and again; her son threw out his long, ill looking arms, as if he expected I should run into them.—

How

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How do you do, cousin?—how do you do, miss Jamima? fast as the words could issue from his blubbering lips, and with a hand, that more resembled a foot, he led me to the library.

Considering what passed the morning I sat out for Bath, the behaviour of my aunt and cousin appeared very unaccountable; *no* resentment, *no* airs of distance;—so importunate about my health, she would scarce permit a door to be opened near me.

My poor deluded uncle, no doubt, thought them sincere—never a man expressed more satisfaction; frequently would he repeat, See how happy you have made us, Jamima; we have counted every

B 2

minute

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minute an hour, since we expected you—then he would tell me how ill he had been—what a charming nurse my aunt was—that he verily believed she had saved his life.—Oh, how I rejoiced when the hour came to retire—I could not bear to see my dear uncle imposed on by two such sycophants.

In my apartment, I found my faithful Sally waiting with impatience to see me.

The good creature was hired to be about my person before the death of my *parents*, and by my uncle Edward's indulgence, continued in that office.

I should have taken her with me to Bath, but the circumstances she
was

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was then in, prevented her from travelling, having been married some months to the *butler*: She only continued with me, till I could get another servant to my satisfaction.

From her, it was, I learnt the plots and contrivances projected to bring me over to their interested purposes. My uncle Edward, I understood, had no rest till he promised to give me up, in case I should prove refractory. Mr. and Mrs. Abington, she told me, took care to send for an attorney as soon as he recovered from the fit, and he was seen by many of the servants, writing in my uncle's bed-chamber — she said likewise, her husband had long suspected dark work going on, but could never get at the truth, till he thought of

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boring a hole from the library, behind the book case, into his pantry.

This he effected one night, after the family were in bed, and the next day, at breakfast, laying his ear close to the hole, he heard a conversation, which he told his wife made his heart tremble within him.

Poor Sally cried bitterly, saying, she feared I had nothing to expect but cruelty.—I know, my dear young lady, she continued, you can never be prevailed on to marry Mr. Abington—but I know your uncle's fortune, if you persist, will be his. Richard would not tell me half what he heard—he said, if I had
listened

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listened to the conversation, it would have killed me on the spot.

I begged she would say no more—I saw her concern was great, and feared it might be attended with bad consequences.—My fate was now too plainly evinced—I heard sufficient for me to understand that I had nothing to hope this side the grave.

I ever avoided making *confidants* of servants—but here it appeared indispensable.—What could I do about Mr. D—?—How could I send him a line without the assistance of Sally?

Convinced she merited my confidence, I did not hesitate to tell her the whole affair—the poor soul

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when I spoke of Mr. D—, brightened up; good God, she exclaimed, running about the room like a mad creature, if I should ever live to see the day—if I should ever live to see my young lady rewarded, and that wretch below punished; but dear, dear madam, pray do mention Mr. D— to my master, when you carry him his chocolate. This, miss Osborne, was always my custom; I never failed of being in his room by seven.—I told her it was my intention to mention him, could I summon resolution, and desired in the mean time, she would think of some trusty person to send to Modbrooke house with a letter.

The instant I was in bed, she left me to consult her husband what method would be most safe and prudent;

prudent;—I then lay down on the pillow, with hopes that fatigue would get the better of my anxieties, that for a few hours, I might at least have a chance to dream of happiness; but I find, by woeful experience, misfortune is a close attendant,—sleeping or awake, her visits are not to be denied;—if we frown, no matter, she takes up her abode where providence directs—it was doomed she must be my guest both night and day.

I slept, it is true,—but it was a frightful sleep;—instead of being refreshed, I awoke in tortures; I dreamt Mr .D— stabbed me with a poignard—that I saw him smile on the horrid deed;—little did I then think my dream would prove prophetic—little did I think, he

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would have had the cruelty to give me the fatal stab.

Fancy was so strong, that even after I got up, it seemed as if I felt vast pain near my heart, just at the very spot where I imagined the poignard entered.

I thought the hour of seven would never arrive; I longed to be in my uncle's apartment;—I was impatient to hear what he would say of Mr. D—. The clock had scarce proclaimed its approach, when starting up, and flying to the door of his chamber,—gently tapping, I heard him call out, in a low voice, come in my child.

No sooner did I draw near the bed, than his eyes glistened with plea-

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pleasure;—I fell on my knees instantly before him, kissing one of his hands which lay on the coverlid;—I perceived he looked delighted, —he called me his dear Jamima, and said, he hoped I should be the comfort of his age.

Here my drooping spirits revived;—his tenderness, his affectionate expressions, were like rich cordials to my sick mind; but alas, their efficacy was soon lost;—I soon felt my disquietudes return with redoubled force;—he confirmed every thing Sally had told me; every thing my poor heart had suggested; sometimes he would threaten, sometimes sooth, yet never receded from his purpose.

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I knelt, entreated, bathed his hands with my tears, vowed explicit obedience in every thing but being united to my *cousin*. Finding he was not to be moved by prayers and entreaties, I hinted my affections were engaged; this made him outrageous, he commanded me from his presence, called me an intriguing girl, and declared he would renounce me for ever.

Still I knelt by his bed, praying, wringing my hands, — don't, my dear uncle, I cried, — don't cast me from you, — let me intreat you will permit me to live single, — suffer me to watch for opportunities to smoothe the down-hill of your life, — let me rise each morning with the joyful expectation of your blessing. — Here he softened, — he appeared

peared concerned at my distress,—wiped off my tears, bid me consider what he had said, and he would still be my friend.

Taking the opportunity of his getting up, I returned to my apartment, and wrote a few lines to Mr. D—, sufficient only to acquaint him how matters stood, that he should know in the evening, if there were any hopes in his favour;—this letter I delivered to Sally, who had a person ready to carry it.

My uncle, I suppose, had informed Mrs. Abington and her son, what had passed;—never did two people look so full of venom,—their eyes were fraught with mischief, and scarce could they take
them

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them off from me the whole time of breakfast.—I thought it best in my sad situation, to behave with condescension; stifling my indignation, I tried every effort to blunt the edge of their revenge; but as this treatment was only returned with cool contempt, I soon took an opportunity to withdraw.

Agitated between *hope* and *fear*, my mind continually on the rack, I determined, let the consequence be what it would, to let my uncle know every thing relating to Mr. D——. Whilst revolving how or when to introduce the subject, Sally brought me a letter, in answer to that which I had sent him a few hours before;—this letter only served to encrease my anxieties, he declared he should be the
most

most miserable creature on earth till he saw me;—begged at all events I would lay his proposals before my uncle, and, if possible, think of some method for him to speak to me that evening.

I must own I was greatly distressed at his situation; what could be so disagreeable?—nobody in the house but servants,—not a soul in the neighbourhood which he knew; at this juncture, I foresaw it was next to an impossibility for me to see him, without the knowledge of the family; indeed I was convinced it would be impolitic to make the attempt.

I had scarce ran through the contents of the letter, when my uncle went up to his dressing room.

Resolved

Resolved not to neglect the present moment, I hastily put it into my pocket, following him so close that I was at the door before he entered.

My resolution being fired by Mr. D—'s perplexities, I begged he would suffer me to lay before him an affair of the last consequence,—that I only requested to be heard with patience.—Speak my Jamima, he said, I will not interrupt you,—I am ready to attend to what you have to say.

Again I summoned resolution to my aid,—again the image of Mr. D— presented itself, and I proceeded without hesitation.—I told him every thing that passed at lord Modbrooke's the morning I left Bath;

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Bath; I told him how very sanguine lord and lady Modbrooke were in the affair,—that Mr. D— was then at his lordship's house.

When I mentioned Mr. D—'s *fortune*,—his *rank*,—his *character*,—his *expectations*, my uncle turned pale as death, crying out, God bless us, — God bless us, — what shall we do, Jamima?—what *can* we do about your uncle and aunt Abington?—I have given my *word*; then rising from his seat, quite in an agony, he exclaimed, Lord help me, Lord help me, I have *done* wrong,—I have done *very* wrong indeed.—To oblige you, Jamima, I think I will see Mr. D—, but it cannot be immediately, I must first consult my *brother*, I must hear how your aunt takes it.

Pray

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— Pray don't consult them, *Sir*, I replied, let me not lie at their mercy; are *you* not *my* parent, *Sir*? What have they to do with *me*? Will *you* suffer them to make *your* child miserable?

Dry up your tears, Jamima; make yourself easy, I will do all in *my* power for your satisfaction; saying this, he went immediately down stairs.

I saw nothing more of him, or any of the family, till dinner; I *supposed* there was a council called, and I *supposed*, by it, my fate would be determined.

They were all seated at table before I had the resolution to join them; God knows, to this moment

I

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I could never account for the alteration so visible in every countenance;—my aunt's face dressed in smiles,—my cousin with one of his best grins,—my uncle's eyes full of expressive serenity;—it seemed as if I had been gone from earth to heaven.—Oh, thought I, my troubles have taken a sudden flight, I shall see no more of them.—How ready we are to flatter ourselves,—to forget the blackest clouds often gather after a clear sky!

It was, my dear Jamima,—my best love, whenever my aunt spoke to me,—my cousin watching every turn of my countenance to oblige.

The cloth being removed, and the servants dismissed, my uncle said, well Jamima, I have mentioned

tioned the affair to your aunt,—you ought to be much obliged to her, she is one of your *best* friends.

Thank you, dear madam, I returned,—this goodness shall never be forgot;—indeed, my dear aunt, you shall never find *me* ungrateful.

I hope, my love, she replied, this will convince you, no mean views pushed me on to wish an alliance for you with my son.

Indeed—indeed I am, madam; and I should certainly have fallen at her feet if her son had not prevented me;—nothing, he declared, rejoiced him so much as the prospect of my happiness, —that he should take every method of shewing it,—and might he be permitted
the

THE COTTAGE. 21

the honour to present my hand to Mr. D—, he would endeavour to forget his own disappointment.

I vow, that moment the *monster* appeared handsome as an *angel*.—I won't be certain, for I hardly know what I did,—but I think I kissed his hand.

Whilst in this high good humour, a scheme was proposed for us all to go to meet my uncle Abington, who was expected at Newton-hall that evening.—My aunt said, she thought it would be agreeable to drink tea at Mr. Harvey's, a gentleman's house, about five miles distant, in the road my uncle must pass through.—I was asked, if I had any objection to let my cousin drive me in his *Phaeton*?

Knowing

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Knowing my uncle Edward must have somebody with him in the chariot, and that my aunt was fearful of being drove in a *Phaeton*, I readily consented to their proposal.

Every thing being settled for our little excursion, my aunt said, she thought I ought to write a line to Mr. D—. By all means, returned my uncle,—do tell him Jamima, we shall be glad to see him here to-morrow,—that he will do us honour by his presence.

I was so overcome with surprise,—so overcome with joy, at this sudden turn, that I only expressed my gratitude by a low court'sey, and flying instantly to the library, I wrote a line or two,
—I

—I think I can repeat the very words.

“ Sir, if you will do us the honour of dining to-morrow at Newton hall,—you will meet a reception worthy yourself,—worthy relations who are striving, which most can contribute to the happiness of your obliged humble servant.”

These lines I laid on the table before my uncle,—before my aunt and cousin, each commended what I wrote,—each repeated how glad they should be to see him.

After it had been read *over* and *over*,—I was requested, by the two latter, to put on a riding dress, saying, they should set out in less than

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than half an hour.—Pleased to have an opportunity of obliging them, even in the most trivial matters, I went instantly up stairs, leaving the letter on the table.

At my return, I found my uncle sleeping in his chair,—my aunt and cousin sitting silent by him;—she whispered me she had sealed the letter,—that she was going to give some orders to her servant, and would deliver it to the person I chose should be the bearer;—the *butler*, madam, said I, if you please; on which she stole out softly, so as not to disturb my uncle, and I saw her, the door being left open, give the letter into Richard's hand.

As soon as my uncle's nap ended, we all sat out,—and according to
the

the plan laid down I went with my cousin in his Phaeton.

The transactions of that day appeared like a dream, many times did I mistrust my senses, many times, as we were driving on, did I look round me with amazement; I *wondered* at my own happiness, I *wondered* what should bring about this strange event; but then I thought, is not *every* thing wonderful? Can I search into the mysteries of divine providence? To know we are governed and led by the hand of the Almighty is sufficient? We need enquire no farther. Every moment that salutes us, brings with it matter for an eternity of praises.

Oh Miss Osborne! continued the resigned angel, if I could then

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have looked into the book of fate, if I could have read how few my days, how full of sorrow, perhaps the soul might have been insensible to its promised bliss,—panting after fleeting pleasures, it might have been wayward and refractory, to see at one glance the overthrow of all its airy buildings ;—you will soon find how I was beset with disappointments, — how swiftly they followed each other.

We met my uncle Abington about a mile short of Mr. Harvey's ; my aunt seeming desirous to drink tea at his house, Mr. Abington turned his horse, and we proceeded on our visit.—There are so many things to engage the attention at Mr. Harvey's—time is so happily beguiled in that agreeable family, I should
not

not wonder if their visitors always went home in the dark.

Before my aunt made any effort to move, the clock had struck seven; I must freely confess I wished to be at home long before that time; the pleasure I proposed in Mr. D----'s answer,—the expected satisfaction of knowing what hour I should see him, made the most sprightly conversation appear tedious and insipid.

My impatient heart rebounded with eagerness as Mr. Harvey led me to the carriage; no sooner was I seated, than I desired my cousin to whip up the horses, complained the evening was far advanced; betraying some concern at being drove in the dark, he said he

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would make the horses fly if my uncle's chariot could keep up, but supposed I should not chuse to leave them far behind; however to shew his inclination to oblige me, he called back several times to the coachman, though without any effect, for still the stubborn fellow kept on his former pace.

In the midway between Mr. Harvey's and Newton-Hall, I beheld two horses full speed coming towards us; being just in the dusk, I could not distinguish the riders till they came up with the Phaeton; Oh Miss Osborne, what a conflict! the foremost as he passed us, curbing his horse, and pulling off his hat, I was struck with inconceivable surprize,—I started, I thought instant death would have seized me,

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me, when I perceived it to be Mr. D---, his eyes turning from the carriage with a look of contemptuous indifference. — Gracious God! I cried, can it be *him*? — Who, returned my cousin, Who do you mean? Why Mr. D---, Sir, I exclaimed, standing up in the Phaeton to look after him. — Well if it is Mr. D---, Miss Abington, he replied, don't hurry yourself, — don't be uneasy; perhaps Mr. D. may not recollect you by this light, I dare say he did not.

Oh yes, I said, he must, I saw he recollected me, -- that I was sure something had happened, — something that would prove fatal to my repose.

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I can't describe what I felt, my heart trembled, my temples beat, I was affected like the earth when it feels convulsions; Oh my poor heart, what did it then suffer? How much has it suffered from that moment!

Enquiring for the butler the instant I got home, he came to me, but with a countenance that foreboded his tidings; Well, Richard, holding out my hand for the expected letter, what said Mr. D---? Upon my word, madam, he returned, I don't know what he said.

Not know what he said, Richard, struck almost senseless, is there no answer to my letter—did not Mr. D--- mention the hour he would be here tomorrow? Why,
madam

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madam, he continued, I only saw his servant, and he told me there was no answer, that his master said it was very well; but fearing some mistake, I sent in the second time, and received the same message as before.

This was sufficient, I staid to hear no more, I ran up to my chamber, and for some hours I know not what became of my senses,—I can forgive my aunt a multitude of her cruelties for the tenderness she then expressed.

Both my uncles and my cousin came frequently to comfort me; a thousand, and a thousand times, did they pronounce Mr. D--- a villain, declaring how happy they were, I had nothing to lay to their

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charge, indeed their pity came very seasonably, without it I certainly must have sunk into despair.

Night after night, day after day, did I drag on, impatiently, eagerly expecting a letter from Lady Modbrook; I wrote her ladyship an account of this strange affair a few days after it happened, I begged she would try to discover the cause, but desired she would not tell Mr. D--- I wanted to be informed.

A week—ten days—a fortnight elapsed, and not one line from Lady Modbrook;—my patience being quite exhausted, I sent Sally to Modbrook-House, bidding her en-
quire

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quire if the servants knew when their lord and lady were expected; — in a few hours she speeded back, but with tidings not less dreadful than those her husband had brought from Mr. D---; she found the servants in a state little short of distraction, — the housekeeper was set out that morning for Bath; — an express arrived in the middle of the night to acquaint her Lord and Lady Modbrook lay at the point of death; — Sally, I suppose, had joined in the general sorrow, her eyes were almost swollen out of her head, and the briny drops trickled down whilst she related the mournful scene.

For my part, I was so overwhelmed, not a tear would come to open a passage to my sorrows, — I went

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about like one who appeared to have sight, and yet was really blind, — I saw *nothing*, that is, every object was *nothing* to me, — when my uncle spoke, — I would answer *Sir* and *Sir*, perhaps not understand a syllable he said.

My aunt used to walk whole hours with me in the garden, — would point out and admire my favourite plants — sometimes pluck a bit of jessamine or orange flower and give into my hand; but I was so lost, so insensible, even to the odoriferous breath of nature, that she might have gathered a nettle, and I should have smelt to it for a rose.

I sent every day to Modbrook-House, but could learn nothing of
Lord

Lord and Lady Modbrook, the servants had received no accounts since the housekeeper sat out.

A week or more had passed from the time I first sent, when one morning coming down earlier than the rest of the family, I caught up a news-paper just brought from the post-office, — opening it trembling and hastily, judge, Miss Osborne, what must be my surprize, — judge my feelings, when the second paragraph informed me, Lady Modbrook died at Bath the twenty-second instant, and it was supposed her lord could not long survive her.

It is impossible for me to say how I was affected, — my faculties were

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suspended,—I fell on the floor,—there I lay in a most deplorable condition, 'till my uncle Edward came in to breakfast :—poor man, how he screamed ! I was roused by his cries even before he ran to lift me up,—catching me in his arms, he cried, my dear Jamima, do speak, do tell me what has happened ? Pointing to the paper,—scarce able to utter a sentence,—see there !—see there ! dear sir, have I not cause ?—Lady Modbrook—and I again, sinking from him, fell on the floor.

My aunt that moment coming in, and being told by her brother what were his conjectures, she advised I should be carried to my apartment, and laid on the bed ; accordingly by her directions I was

was placed in a chair and bore up stairs between two servants.

I recollect little of what passed for some days; this fresh aggravation to my afflictions brought on a violent fever; I believe it was near three weeks before I had strength to walk across the room,—it surprized me to see every body so anxious for my recovery.—Mr. and Mrs. Abington declared they would not return to their own house 'till I was enough recovered to go with them, — my uncle Edward scarce ever left me,—my cousin appeared to be divested of the bear, and to have taken on him the gentleness of a lamb; he never once renewed his detestable passion, but said and did every thing to draw off my attention

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tention from melancholy reflections.

In tenderness for my health, Lord Modbrook's death was concealed with so much precaution, that the honoured remains, both of him and his lady were five weeks deposited in the family vault, before it came to my knowledge.

How blest should I have been, if the contagious disorder which swept away this pair had laid hold on me before I left Bath? — It is impossible to imagine what I suffered in the space of four months; one might really have supposed I was a mark set up by fortune to be shot at.

Wearied

Wearied with disappointments I became unfit for society,—I could neither read or work ;—if I rode out, it would be to the forsaken spot,—the once delightful abode of my dear Lord and Lady Modbrook ;—whole hours have I walked alone in the park,—visited and wept over the temples, —sighed on the neglected shrubs and flowers,—looked wistfully into the gardens,—and as to the house, I have often thought that an emblem of my own mind, the darkened windows,—the closed doors,—every thing shewed how gloomy without, how sadly reversed within.

To oblige my aunt, as I had experienced so much tenderness from her during my sickness, I consented.

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ented to return with them home, and spend the Christmas holidays at their house.

In the neighbourhood where they lived was a deal of genteel company ;—on our arrival they all came to pay their compliments ; a circumstance, though very disagreeable to me, I could not take the liberty of mentioning to my aunt ; yet one would suppose she must see how every new face augmented my grief.—What can be more painful than to put on an appearance of cheerfulness when the heart is pining with sorrow ?

The eve preceding new-year's day, to my inexpressible satisfaction, my uncle Edward sent his
chariot

chariot, and a message desiring his brother and sister, with their son, would accompany me to Newton-hall, — that he proposed vast pleasure in beginning the new year with his relations.

In compliance with this request, we sat out immediately, and before nine reached the spot where fortune delighted to appear with her train of fickle companions.

My uncle Edward never expressed such pleasure as when he saw me flying to his arms; the parental kiss cheered my heart, — I looked at him as a poor mariner does on land after a severe tempest; but, like a poormariner in sight, nay, in the very touch of all his hopes, I was drove back by a sudden gust

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of wind, tossed about, up and down, at the mercy of the waves, 'till one more friendly than the rest, rolls over me and shuts out all my miseries.

The degree of fondness which my uncle Edward expressed at my return home, so greatly disconcerted Mr. and Mrs. Abington, that they looked at each other as if all their avaricious hopes were that moment blasted; but judging it, I suppose, convenient to disguise their chagrin, they put on a shew of cheerfulness, through which might be discovered the deformed image of a guilty mind.

My uncle, soon after supper, withdrew to give his steward directions

rections concerning an estate he was about to purchase; telling us, as he went out, he thought we might amuse ourselves with a game at cards.

My spirits had long been too much sunk to fix my attention on cards—in short on any other amusement; but seeing Mr. and Mrs. Abington, and their son, not averse to the proposal, I ordered the card-table; and excusing myself from making one in the party, got them to engage at cribbage.

Whilst they were busily employed at play, I sat down by the fire, ruminating and brooding over my heavy disappointments; thinking I could trace in the very embers

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bers, persons, who, though gone for ever from my sight, were always present in my imagination; my head was full of idle chimeras; one moment fancy would raise a beautiful edifice, the next by a sigh blow it down; sometimes it would whisper me, misfortune had done her work, that she was fled to another country; but again I should see the hag close at my elbow; God knows, close at my elbow in reality she stood; Oh Miss Osborne! this was the *hour*, the fatal *hour*, that left me a poor friendless creature; that took from me the last of all earthly comforts!

I tremble at the recollection of the sound which roused me from my reverie; I still have it in my ears,

ears, I feel now the dreadful something which rushed through my heart.

The clock had just struck eleven, when a scream issued from the library that seemed to pierce the very walls ; what escaped me, I suppose, was not less loud or shrill ; for, in my fright, I jumped over two chairs, threw down the card table, and rushed like lightning to the door. — Good God, on opening it, what did I behold ! — Oh sight of horror ! — Oh heart-rending scene ! there lay my uncle stretched on the floor, his face black, and convulsed from head to foot ; — as I ran towards him, his eyes rolled about ; turning towards me with a dreadful stare. — The steward, terrified to death,

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death, was on his knees unbuckling, and opening the collar of his shirt. How like a mad creature did I appear, running from side to side,—crying—beseeching—begging some body would let him blood.

Physicians and surgeons were immediately sent for, but before they could arrive a vein was opened by one of the servants.

In the midst of my agonies I neglected no means that could restore him, I knelt down by his side, I rubbed his temples with drops—poured drops and water into his mouth, and chafed his head with spirits.

Mr.

Mr. and Mrs. Abington, so did their son, looked as if they were called to their last dreadful account. My dear dying uncle kept his eyes incessantly fixed on *me*, every now and then pointing with his finger to the ceiling.

I begged he might be moved up stairs, but he shook his head as if I understood not his meaning,—What would he have? cried Mrs. Abington. What does he want? In an accent faltering, thick and scarce intelligible,—with a groan, he waved his hand to a pen and ink that stood on the table; in a moment I got up and brought it to him with a bit of paper that lay near;—after many efforts, he took the pen in his fingers, but how did
his

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his agonies increase when his bent fingers refused their office.

Nature was making her last struggles, when the physician and surgeon entered; his dear head rested on my lap,—both my hands held over his eyes.

After feeling his pulse, I heard them whisper my aunt, no hopes, beckoning to have me borne from him,—Heaven knows how I was dragged away — I recollect little what passed that night or the two ensuing days.

There was now an end to my aunt's tenderness, she never saw me but once during that time, and then only to confirm, what the
silence

silence observed throughout the house had but too plainly discovered.

My poor Sally, who sat continually weeping by me, entreated I would not throw away my life, often requesting, I would arm myself against the worst;—the worst, Sally, I would reply, is not the *worst* past? Can I suffer more than I have done?

Things, she said, bore an odd appearance, that my aunt had taken all the keys into her possession, and had ordered the undertaker to follow no directions but hers.

I paid little attention to subjects like these, worldly matters could add nothing to my distress.

50 THE COTTAGE.

Mr. Abington, or his son, never once deigned to enquire for me, my aunt indeed would sometimes run into my apartment, just ask, how I did?—If I wanted any thing?—talked to me of the absurdity of immoderate grief, and persuaded me to come down stairs.

The day after my poor deluded uncle was interred, I had a message from Mr. Abington, to know if I chose to be present at opening the will; —the reply I returned was this, that my spirits were too low for such an undertaking,—that I only desired to be acquainted with what in it concerned myself.

The note I received in answer, informed me, that my uncle Edward, in case I consented to marry his
his

THE COTTAGE. 31

his nephew, had left me possessed of his whole fortune;—but should I think proper to decline this union, I was entitled to no more than five hundred pounds.—Mr. Abington was pleased to add, if I determined on the latter, he intended to order me handsome mourning.

Heavy as this blow might seem to another, its force was lost on me;—I lifted up my heart with thankfulness, that I became not destitute;—that the remnant of my father's fortune would supply me with necessaries.

Before I wrote an answer to the *low* minded author of this *low* epistle, I ordered Sally to pack up my cloaths, — and send to the next town for a chaise, resolving never

52 THE COTTAGE.

again to sleep under the roof of such designers.

Every thing being settled for my departure, I sat down, and penned the following lines, directing them to Mr. Abington.

“ I am not at all surprized, Sir, at the contents of your billet;— you have taken great pains to get your brother’s fortune, *pray enjoy it, free from molestation.*—Upon my word, I accept my small legacy with *more* pleasure, than I should *millions* gained by fraudulent means.

“ In order to give you no farther trouble on *my* account, I now solemnly protest, rather than accept my uncle’s fortune, on the condition he has bequeathed it, I would
be

be a *beggar* all my days;—I would even lie at the doors of those who spurn at distress.

“ You must pardon, Sir, my accepting your intended favour;—I am but *too* sensible, how *much* it has cost to put my *inside* in mourning.

“ When I become intitled to my legacy, please to pay it into the hands of your late brother's steward; this demand complied with, there will be no other made on you, by

JAMIMA ABINGTON.”

I desired Richard to deliver my letter when I got out of the house; I did not know, if it was delivered before, what insults I might re-

54 THE COTTAGE.

ceive.—The abuser will always wreak the vengeance he merits himself, on the abused.

I found, by Richard, he intended to give his present master warning that very day; and he joined with his wife in entreaties, that I would take her with me, till the time came, when it would be necessary for her to retire to a little house he had purchased and furnished for her reception.

The fidelity of these *domesticks* gave me no small satisfaction;—I thankfully accepted their proposal, and assured Richard, I would be tender of his wife;—that for her sake, I should not think of moving to any great distance.

Where

Where to fix my abode, was a thing I had not then considered;—I had only determined against intruding on an acquaintance; from observation I had learnt, how the generality of people look on those, who have nothing to bring into their houses but complaints.

It was near the hour of dinner before the chaise arrived.—I gave orders it should come no nearer the house than the park wall, that I might slip off unperceived, dreading of all things, an interview with my unworthy relations.

Sally bringing me word that the *chaise* waited, I made what haste I could to get away, never suspecting how much my strength had suffered from my late misfortune, for at the

56 THE COTTAGE.

bottom of the stairs, I was obliged to stop, panting for breath, before I could stir one step further.

Hearing a door opened, and fearing who might approach, I caught hold of Sally's arm as she was going through the passage, towards the back entrance; the cook, who stood at the kitchen door, looked surprized, when she beheld me going out, followed by Richard, with several little band boxes; — I wish you well, Mary, said I; — I could not avoid speaking to her. — She was a sober, good creature, much valued by her late master.

Dear madam, she replied, you are not going to leave us, sure? — If you are, and she threw down a knife she held in her hand, exclaiming,

ing, I will not stay one moment longer in the house.—Don't mind me, Mary,—don't mind me, I returned, and the tears streamed from my eyes.

To part from faithful servants, those we have lived with from infancy, is certainly painful, but I even felt severe pangs at leaving the house.—What can there be in walls, to cause emotions of pain or pleasure?—What can make us sigh to quit a dwelling, when it is occupied by the most depraved of God's creatures?

Indeed miss Osborne, I thought my heart would have burst— I thought it would have clove in sunder when I passed an old oak, under whose venerable branches I

58 THE COTTAGE.

used often to sit and prattle to my uncle Edward, whilst he smoked his afternoon's pipe.

Looking from side to side, — bidding a last farewell to every thing around me, I espied my aunt and her son, running towards us, down the avenue; this threw me into such a fright, that I cried out to the servants to assist me to the carriage. Richard, on perceiving, why I was so alarmed, caught me up, and in his hurry, bruised my arm against the door.

Pain of mind, had so far prevailed over that of the body, that I took no notice of the accident, but after Sally was in, and seated, I ordered the driver to make what haste he could towards L——.

Happy

Happy for my poor head, I soon fell into a sort of insensibility, a state only to be desired by the wretched, a kind of suspension to sorrow.

I had given orders it is true, to be drove towards L——, but I had never once considered, when I should arrive there, where, or at what house to be set down.

Sally, I suppose, conjecturing from my being so absent, that I thought nothing of this matter, asked, when we came within a mile of the town, if I chose to lodge that night at an inn,—or if I intended going to the house of some tradesman.

The last mentioned scheme pleased me vastly;—I dreaded going to

60 THE COTTAGE.

an inn, though but for one night, having frequently travelled in the dark to avoid so disagreeable a circumstance.

I knew there were several of my late uncle's trades-people, who thought themselves not a little obliged to me, and who, I made no doubt, would gladly accommodate me, till I could fix on a lodging suitable to my inclinations.

Without deliberating on the point, I called to the driver, ordering him to set us down at Mr. Charter's, a linnen-draper, in the Fore-street. I fixed on Mr. Charter preferable to any others, because I had a slight knowledge of his wife and daughters, and knew them

THE COTTAGE 61

them to be women of excellent characters.

Now Miss Osborne, continued the fair sufferer, I am drawing near a conclusion;—I am sensible how much I have intruded on your patience;—a few minutes longer, and you are released from the disagreeable task.—Before I could reply, she proceeded in the following manner.

I was received so genteelly by this family, that I wished, if it could be made convenient, to continue with them. The next morning, at breakfast, I mentioned my inclinations of boarding in, or near the town;—that if Mr. Charter could recommend me where I might live retired, where I should
be

62 THE COTTAGE.

be treated with tenderness and good manners, I would not be wanting on my part, but endeavour to make myself agreeable to the people who should receive me.

In a moment, I had the offer of his best apartments, his wife and daughters declaring, at the same time, if I would honour them by accepting the proposal, their whole study should be to make me happy.

The manner, — the expressive looks of sincerity, which attended their words, made me not hesitate, and before we moved from the tea-table, every thing was settled to our mutual satisfaction.

With these good folks, I lived upwards of two years, and should
certainly

certainly have breathed my last in their house, if my physicians had not prevailed on me to try the Bristol waters.

The time I remained at L——, I never enquired any thing concerning the family at Newton-hall, requesting those about me would forbear mentioning their names.

Several of my former acquaintance, drawn, I suppose, by curiosity, came to pay me visits of condolance.—Whether it is natural for the unfortunate to be suspicious, to see things in a light disadvantageous to themselves, or whether the age is grown so cruel to look contemptuously on the distressed, is a point I shall not endeavour to clear up; but certain it is, I thought myself

64 THE COTTAGE.

myself continually insulted till I dropped all commerce with the world.

Sally, good creature, never left me, till it became necessary, and then, I was certain to see her or her husband, most weeks, their house being only three miles distant from L——; nothing, I am convinced, would have prevented the former from attending me to Bristol, but the ill health of her little girl.

Judging, I suppose, from my appearance, there were little hopes I should ever return, Sally and Richard, the last week I remained at E——, came almost every day to enquire for me. But you cannot imagine, miss Osborne, how greatly they distressed me; I perceived
their

THE COTTAGE. 65

their hearts labouring with some fresh trouble,—I perceived too it was on *my* account, yet what, thought I, can it be?—The weak state I had long been in,—the near prospect of my death could be nothing new or surprizing, to people who *saw*, and were *acquainted* with the cause; besides I often told them, I should be angry if they repined at my lot,—if I even thought they wished my days to be lengthened.

Poor compassionate creatures,—this was the cause of their sorrow, taking a letter from her pocket, see miss Osborne, if I could have any idea from whence it proceeded;—observe, my dear lady, I make no comments on the fickle wretch,—I could not trust myself on the provoking subject; I have transcribed

Sally's

66 THE COTTAGE.

Sally's letter for your perusal, which letter she sent her lady not many hours after she left her for the last time.

“Honoured madam, — pardon the boldness of your servant, — I have something that lies very heavy at my heart, — I wanted resolution, or I should have made you acquainted with it yesterday; I know what my dear honoured young lady has suffered concerning a certain gentleman; and if you were to hear after you got to Bristol, when you had nobody to speak to but strangers, that he is soon to be married, perhaps a second shock might have killed you all at once.

“It is *really* so, my honoured young lady, he is *really* going to be married,

married, I had it from lady Paulina Hudson's woman, who is now at Modbrook house, with lady Margaret Henley, and her young mistress.—I hope God will give you patience, and the gentleman his deserts.

I am, honoured madam, with all duty and regard, your most grateful and obliged servant,

SARAH BELLAMY."

The faithful creature was mistaken,—I felt no shock at this account, it signified not to me, whether he married or lived single;—long had it been out of *his* power, either to heighten or diminish my afflictions.

The

68 THE COTTAGE.

The day after the receipt of the above, I sat out for Collingwood house, in my way to Bristol, often promising lady Susan, if ever I came within twenty miles where she lived, I would certainly treat myself with a visit.

I need not tell miss Osborne the excellence of this charming woman;—I need not tell you, madam, how much she endeavours to make those she honours with her acquaintance, happy as herself;—her sweet, her compassionate temper, often tempted me to lay my heart naked before her.—I wanted to repose my sorrows in a bosom where they would be soothed, —where they would be received by the mild eye of pity.

What

THE COTTAGE. 69

What prevented me from this discovery, was something which escaped the lips of lord Portland, not two hours after I arrived at his lordship's house;—nothing, I will assure you miss Osborne, for she saw me look surprized, *nothing* which could lessen his lordship or lady Susan in my esteem.—The secrets of *another* I hold sacred, my *own* I may give to a friend.

I hope my looks expressed my approbation of such *noble*, such *exalted* sentiments, any thing I could have said just then, must have appeared very low and insipid. — Your ladyship will remember I did not speak, so you will suppose miss Abington proceeding.

Prejudiced

70 THE COTTAGE.

Prejudiced, miss Osborne, as I was in your favour, when lady Susan brought me with her to Windsor,—I could then have no idea *you* was the person allotted to hear my last complainings,—that *you* was the person, pointed out by heaven, to administer to me friendship's last cordial draught.

One wish, miss Osborne, and then every wish of my heart is fulfilled;—that lady Susan may not think me ungrateful, that she may forgive my not writing after I arrived at Bristol.—Pray, miss Osborne, tell her ladyship, it was not owing to neglect or insensibility, but tell her it was owing to the apprehension I had, that she would be averse to my determined scheme of retirement, which scheme I resolved

THE COTTAGE. 71

solved on before I had been in Bristol two days. — Lady Susan some time hence should have known the cause of this sudden determination. — I have a letter by me which I gave orders should be delivered to her ladyship, soon as the last offices were performed.

She smiled such a look of innate joy at mention of the last offices, as almost made me think her soul was going to take its flight; — Fool indeed, I caught hold of both her hands, as if I expected soul and body would have mounted together.

Lord help me, how shall I support the hour she alludes to; — leave her I never will, — no, not till she has drawn her latest breath; — but
let

72. THE COTTAGE.

let me tell your ladyship what caused her to determine on this sudden scheme of retirement.

The second day after her arrival at Bristol, going to the pump room to drink the waters, she beheld, to her great amazement, Mr. D—— enter, just as she had put a glass of water to her lips.

The sight of this perfidious man so affected her tender spirits, that it was with some difficulty, she crept to the door, where her chair waited; no sooner was she in, and the curtain drawn, than she heard a voice say, *stop* chairmen, I *must* speak to the lady—to *me*, she replied, with a trembling accent, letting down one of the glasses!—To *me*, Sir, with looks of amazement,

ment, when she discovered the person to be Mr. D—; Yes, madam, to *you*?—It is to *you* I desire to address a few words—Will you suffer me to wait on you at your lodgings?—I must speak to you, miss Abington,—by heavens you *must* hear me.

I believe, miss Osborne, said she, it was my looks and manner that made him address me thus warmly, for both certainly must acquaint him with what my tongue immediately confirmed:—No, Sir,—you shall never speak more to me,—I will *never* more be infatuated with your smooth words, leave me Mr. D——, leave me instantly; and I pushed away his hand, which rested on the inside of the chair.

The rage and resentment his eyes that moment expressed, are not to be described; and he flew from her, she said, like lightning, bidding the chairmen go on.

That morning's adventure, she told me, hastened on the hour which she now waited for with impatience, and she verily believed, nothing but the apprehension of a visit from him could have supported her in the many little excursions she made to the neighbouring villages, in pursuit of a peaceful abode, where she might hold herself in readiness for the joyful summons.

Not many days elapsed before she fixed on one much to her satisfaction,

THE COTTAGE. 75

-faction, and was proceeding to take up her residence in it, when she was seized with strong fainting fits, and brought by the chaise drivers, to this little cot;—the humanity of its owners,—the ten thousand circumstances which conspired to make this sequestered spot a fit habitation to a mind like *her's*, made her resolve, if permitted, to exchange it for that she had before made choice of.

Here ends my arduous task—I hasten now to ask miss Abington how she has slept.

When I have seen Doctor H—, your ladyship shall know if there are any hopes.

76 THE COTTAGE.

In the mean time I have the honour to be

Your ladyship's obliged friend,
and very humble servant,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

Lady SUSAN COLLINGWOOD to
Miss OSBORNE.

Collingwood-House.

I WRITE the instant I perused
yours,—poor dear miss Abing-
ton—poor dear soul, how I weep—
how I sob for her sufferings;—
good God, what vile creatures are
her relations;—what a disgrace to
mankind is Mr. D—?

If you had not told me you
would remain with her, I should
have been distracted.—I will come
to her myself;—I will be with you
both as soon as Mr. and Mrs. Ver-
non leave us.

78 THE COTTAGE.

I never knew what vexation was till *now*—poor lord and lady Modbrooke, if they had lived to see this day, if they had lived to see their dear Jamima, as they used to call her, dying in a cottage—Oh, miss Osborne, you used to tell me of my charming spirits;—you used to say I was the life of every company, tell me so no more,—*never* more expect to see me smile.

Before this salutes your fair hands, your brother will have thrown his arms about your neck—your brother—I don't know what I was going to say—sure this scheme of going abroad with the *duke* is the *most* unaccountable—the *most* sudden, and—but don't for your life say that I have taken any notice of it.

Give

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Give my best—my sincerest love to miss Abington—tell her I know she *must* recover,—that her disorder will be removed, when we all promise she shall never again be unhappy.

She shall live with me at Collingwood-house;—if she objects to *that*, I will live with *her* in the little cottage.—Oh, man! man! For what wert thou designed?—To be our tormentors I believe.

Remember you forfeit my confidence, if a syllable of what I have said about *your brother*, escapes you to *him*;—let *him* go,—yes, pray miss Osborne, let him go;—he is tired of England,—he is tired of—his *friends*,—ay, that was what I

80 THE COTTAGE.

meant to say,—but the duke made it his request, no doubt,—I told him his grace should certainly be obliged;—well—well, this is no business of mine,—I want, my dear miss Osborne, to hear what Dr. H— says of Miss Abington; I have ordered Robert to be at the post-office an hour before the western mail is expected.

Upon my word, Miss Osborne, I am sincere when I say you are the dearest friend of

S. COLLINGWOOD.

LET-

LETTER XVI.

MISS OSBORNE to Lady SUSAN

COLLINGWOOD.

The Cottage.

I TAKE up the pen—lay it down — take it up again,—surprize and grief, dear lady Susan, have almost divested me of the power either to think, speak, or write,—yes, my brother has been here, so has Dr. H——; must I tell you? —May I venture to tell you, there are no hopes of Miss Abington.

What a scene have I before me! she has no father,—no mother,—no tender relation; but I see it is

82 THE COTTAGE.

in the power of friendship to pay the tribute of those tears which through divine mercy they are spared.

My brother I said has been here: Oh lady Susan! what shall I say in regard to his leaving England? He is not *tired* of *his* friends,—he is not *tired* of *his* country;—if your ladyship knew his heart *as I do*, you would think; so — a request from the duke of Lester has more weight with him than a command from the first monarch on earth,—I long to tell your ladyship why he is so firmly attached to this nobleman, but his dearest hopes forbid it.

Next

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Next Monday — ay, next Monday, I shall be parted from the best of brothers; God knows how long I shall be parted from him, — perhaps for ever, — he says but *ten* months, I believe he thinks so *now*, but if his grace should chuse to lengthen out that number to *ten times ten*, I know, I well know, he would never return without him. — He talks of taking Collingwood-House in his way to town, — I must not venture to declare what he farther said on that subject.

When do Mr. and Mrs. Vernon take their leave? — When is it I am to be honoured with your ladyship's presence here? — But you must not, my dear lady Susan, think of spend-

84 THE COTTAGE

ing your nights in this poor hovel, my father's coach shall attend you both morning and evening.

By permission of the good old couple, Isaac and Sarah, I have fitted up a little room within the kitchen;— what I call fitted up is hanging it with common paper, laying a coarse carpet on the floor, and the chimney converted to something like a Bath stove.—Poor Miss Abington! I have said nothing of this alteration to her;—sweet angel! she will never more come out of her apartment.

Doctor H— told me, we could do nothing but keep her quiet and easy;— you must not expect, Miss Osborne,

THE COTTAGE. 85

Osborne, said he, when I talked to him alone,—you *must* not expect the young lady will recover, but she may linger on some time in this way.

What a sentence!—something of the kind we have all to expect; one common fate is the portion of us mortals; but then, it is to be hoped, few experience a life like the poor condemned innocent.

My brother wanted of all things to see her;—so far was I from gratifying his inclinations that way, that I told him I would not for the world whisper Miss Abington a stranger had been in the house.

Sarah

86 THE COTTAGE

Sarah informs me a gentleman's servant is below, desirous to see me immediately ;—but first I must tell your ladyship, Miss Abington sends you a thousand blessings ; she says, if you come within a few days, she believes, she shall deliver her thanks personally,—a stone would have softened into briny drops when those words escaped her,—I am not made of stone, my heart bleeds whilst I recite them,—my eyes are so dimmed with tears, I can scarce see to write the name of your's, &c.

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

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LETTER XVII.

From the same to the same.

The Cottage.

GRACIOUS heaven, to what are we all reserved!—What will become of me?—What will become of the duke of Lester?—What will become of every person interested in the fate of this sweet angel?

What will become of the duke of Lester?—Does your ladyship ask, how can *he* be particularly interested in the fate of Miss Abington?—Oh lady Susan, I fear my confused ideas!—I fear my disordered brains
will

88 THE COTTAGE.

will prevent me from unraveling the strangest mystery that ever was brought to light.

Villain—villain—villain!—Pardon me, my dear lady, I was absolutely choaked before I pronounced him three times a villain;—his mother—yes, I shall be choaked again,—she is, if possible, ten thousand times worse than the brute she brought into the world.

First, I must tell your ladyship the duke of Lester is that very person,—that very Mr. D—, whom Miss Abington supposed *so* cruel, — *so* base;—but he is neither base nor cruel;—no, no, he is every thing to be admired, — he is every thing to be revered in man,—what shall

THE COTTAGE. 89

shall I say next?—Why he is in a state of despair?—His Jamima in a state not to be described, or ever to be seen but in *her*?—Smiling as an angel,—peaceful as a dove,—forgiving as mercy.

Well, I positively must go down to the poor souls below;—there sits my father,—there sit my mother and brother, poor Sir Hugh and lady Melcombe are with the duke, on a bench under an old yew-tree behind the house.

Once again, I take up the pen; yet am I as much at a loss where to begin, or where to end, as I was the first moment I began to write.—Let me recollect; Did not I say something in the conclusion of my
last

90 THE COTTAGE.

last letter, that a servant enquired for me;—from that servant began my surprize; he was no other than the duke's valet,—one who used to attend his grace when he visited at my father's. — Seeing my surprize, for I believe I started back several paces, he cried, Nothing has happened, madam, his grace is just by, and entreats the favour of your stepping out; particular reasons, he says, prevent his coming into the house 'till he has seen you.

Without replying, I flew through the garden, and was posting towards the opposite hill, when I perceived his grace turning the corner of the evergreen hedge; — Miss Osborne, my dear Miss Osborne, as he approached, don't be surprized

THE COTTAGE. 91

surprized, every body is well; Sir Francis and lady Osborne, with your brother, are very near; they will be here in less than ten minutes.

Not considering the message delivered to me by his servant, I asked, if he would condescend to walk into the house? —No, madam, he replied, I cannot enter those doors, I must not venture another step; 'till I have reposed a secret in your bosom, which my heart labours to give up.

Am I worthy your grace's confidence? —I returned, Has providence pointed out a method by which I may shew my gratitude? If I can, speak it instantly; —my life, if required

92 THE COTTAGE.

quired, shall testify the vast debt of friendship I owe you.

Most generous, most honourable of women, he replied, you owe me nothing ; — tell me, only tell me, if the poor departing creature ever mentioned my name.

Who do you mean, my lord duke, full of amazement, not miss Abington sure ? — Yes, my sweet friend, I mean miss Abington ; — I mean one who has used me treacherously.

Miss Abington dealt treacherously ! — No, Sir, — pardon me, miss Abington's heart is unacquainted with treachery, — she knows not guile, — she is free from deceit, —
— she

she is free from the arts of this world, as the angels that watch around her bed; — but how came your grace acquainted with her? — I thought the first and only time you had ever seen her, was at Windfor with Lady Susan Collingwood.

My impatience, madam, is too great to admit an explanation; — say, are there hopes of her recovery? — I know Doctor H— has given her over; but, tell me, if you think she is past hopes?

Really, Sir, scarce knowing what I said, I did think—I did flatter myself, before Doctor H— came; but *now*—but *now*, I have *no* hopes; — here he turned from
me

me, and flung himself on the ground, whilst his distorted features expressed the agony of his heart.

In my fright, I ran to him,— caught one of his hands, and attempted to lift him up; perceiving my distress, he cried, don't hurry yourself, my dear miss Osborne, don't hurry yourself, — still I held his hand, — still did his eyes roll from side to side, as if starting from their orbits.

The sound of wheels proclaiming the approach of my father and mother;—with a look of eagerness that pierced my very soul, he exclaimed, What, *must* she die, miss Osborne!— Is she really the angel
you

you represent her?—Oh let us go,
—Oh, my dearest friend, let us
go where we may not be interrupt-
ed;—saying this, he got up from
the ground, and taking one of my
hands, led me towards the old
yew-tree.

What did she never tell you,
miss Osborne, as we proceeded,—
Did she never tell you of *one* that
doated on her?—Of *one* that loved
her to distraction?—If she repents,
if she is so resigned, must she not
have made her confession? The
happy leave all their guilt behind,
it is not atoned for to heaven, un-
less the injury is confessed.

Oh no, Sir, again I repeated,
she never injured any;—it is she—
it

96 THE COTTAGE.

it is the poor unfortunate that has been so grossly injured.

She injured, — she injured ! By whom, miss Osborne ?

Ay, that is a point I cannot resolve your grace.

Not resolve me, madam ! And his looks spoke nothing but frenzy, Why for aught I know, miss Osborne, your friend may be saved from death by such a discovery.— Injured ! Great God, tell me who has injured her ?—Was it her uncle Edward ?—Was it her low-minded cousin ? — Was it his mercenary parents ?

Yes

Yes, — yes, — yes! — all, they were all accessory to the murder of miss Abington; — but the stab, the *fatal* stab was not given by either; here the tears ran in torrents down my face.

Tell me, Miss Osborne, said his grace, starting up from the bench where we were then sitting, tell me, my dear miss Osborne, by whom, — tell — tell me, by what cursed hand?

Oh Sir, I replied, I know not his name, — I know not to what family he is a disgrace.

Cannot you say *where* he lived? — *Where* she first saw him? — Cannot you tell me *some* trifling circumstance by which I may discover the villain.

98 THE COTTAGE.

Suppose I could help your grace to discover the villain, what would that avail?—It is too late now,—it is too late indeed; miss Abington cannot be dragged from the arms of death; besides, my lord duke, I have promised to keep the secret:—Must the dying be disobeyed?—Must I—here he interrupted me with a countenance so determined, I tremble, even now, to recollect what it menaced:—Remember, miss Osborne, it is you that drive me from my friends,—it is you that drive me from my country;—it is you, madam, from whom I had every thing to hope, that can thus shut your heart and ears to my entreaties; six hours since I altered my resolution of leaving
Eng-

THE COTTAGE. 99

England;—six hours hence I bid adieu to—stop, stop my lord duke, I cried, don't proceed; don't make us more wretched than we are already, I will tell you where the first saw the ingrate—I will tell you all I know of the horrid affair.

Thank you my angel, he exclaimed, point out to me the fiend, and, by heaven and earth, he shall meet with his deserts.

Oh! let me entreat your grace—let me entreat, the guilty wretch may escape your vengeance; if you knew how great his crime,—if you did but know what a length of time is required for his repentance, sure you would not shorten

100 THE COTTAGE.

the span allotted for such a dreadful reckoning.

First tell me, miss Osborne, where she met this worst of men, let me be acquainted with the circumstances of his villainy; I will try—I will endeavour—but, my dearest madam, I cannot promise any thing.

If you do command,—if your grace is determined to wrest the secret from me, it was at Bath she first saw him;—At Bath! he retorted, his face dyed like purple—At Bath?

Yes, at Bath, my lord duke—at the rooms, and the next morning at lord Modbrook's.

And

And does she dare, madam, to asperse *my* character?—Does she dare to paint *me* a villain?—*She*—how did passion speak at his eyes when he pronounced this sentence!

You, my lord duke, breaking in on his enraged expressions;—*you*—what are *you* the person she spoke of as Mr. D—?

Yes, miss Osborne, I am the person that was entrapped by her fair outside;—I am the person that she basely—cruelly deceived;—I am the person that followed her to—shire; I am the person she made a dupe of, that she exercised her low artifice on, in order to gain over her cursed—her vile—her detested cousin. —Will the

mask of hypocrisy hang on to the last, does it stick so *very* close?—Will nothing but the conqueror's hand shake it off?—Oh, death!—death!—death! where is thy sting, if not in the guilty breast?

Hear me, I cried,—pray your grace hear me but for one moment.

Yes, miss Osborne—best of women, I will hear you—speak—what is it you would say?

I will speak—I must be heard, but I entreat your grace will be silent—you must promise not to interrupt me, I cannot bear to hear miss Abington,—the injured miss Abington so abused.

See

See miss Osborne, I am silent,—
 I am prepared to listen to her defence, if you think crimes like hers can be defended; I will here consider myself at the bar of justice;—I will pay strict attention to the council who pleads the cause of my opponent.

Here he ended, and I immediately entered on that part of her history which concerned himself; how proceeded, or in what words, my present hurry of spirits prevents me from relating. At that period, which no doubt your ladyship recollects, where she wrote Mr. D—a note, requesting his company the ensuing day at Newton Hall. He eagerly snatched from a pocket

F 4

book,

book, the note which he supposed penned by her own hand.

Will your ladyship blame me, if, instead of pronouncing her base cousin three times a villain—I pronounce him so three thousand times?—Yes, lady Susan, it must be himself, or his unwomanly mother, that forged the hand of our dear—our much lamented friend.

Thank God, the duke is undeceived;—thank God, she is satisfied of his integrity.—Where am I running? I have not yet told your ladyship his *surprise*—his *joy*—his *indignation*, when I related how *very* different the style and diction of what she intended for him,

him, from the vile forgery he received.

Is it not strange, surprize, joy and indignation should be expressed in the features at one moment? — *Surprize* and *joy* often meet, and are always heightened by each other: But how can *indignation*, your ladyship will ask, mix with those passions? I answer, it is the *mind*, — it is the *mind* that sends out her messengers to proclaim what is within; — but to the purport of this vile note, — not the purport only, I will send your ladyship the very words.

“ Sir, — I have consulted my relations, I have likewise consulted my own heart, on the overtures you

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generously made;—the former, as well as the latter, have convinced me of *my* error, and that I ought to think and act consistent with the duty I have endeavoured studiously to observe.—The affectionate treatment I now meet with,—the promises I this day have received, that I shall ever experience the same, determines me in favour of a suit, I have long and obstinately rejected.

“ I hope you will soon meet a woman, who, consistent with her duty, can give a heart such as you merit; to hear you are perfectly happy, will at all times, give great satisfaction to your sincere friend, and humble servant,

JAMIMA ABINGTON.

“ P. S.

“ P. S. I desire you will spare yourself the pains of answering this, as all letters from you will be sent back unopened; your coming here will likewise be needless; I am just going to take an airing with my cousin.”

Dear lady Susan, what think you, can the fellow be hanged for this act of villainy?—I fear not—I fear our laws are deficient in regard to such miscreants.—Heaven avert; he should receive his punishment from the hand—What was I going to say? Sure mortals dare not—at least if they are christians, take on them the prerogative of the Almighty;—Why has the almighty taken on himself, this prerogative? Because he is our general parent,

and who corrects with such justice, such lenity, as parents; whilst a parent strikes, he feels the blow.

I have done nothing else but pray that his grace may be kept from this worst of men; what miss Abington said to him an hour since, will, I hope, be sufficient to blunt the edge of his revenge.

I hate to look back,—I am confused, I know not where I broke off, I want to introduce your ladyship to a tender scene,—to a scene that will freeze your very blood, but this you must wait for till another post; I shall send what I have wrote by one of my father's servants,

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vants, with orders to put it immediately into the post office.

Most affectionately,

my dear lady,

I am yours,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

From the same to the same.

WITHOUT preface, I shall proceed to what I know your ladyship is impatient for.

When his grace had in some degree calmed the tumults of his disturbed soul,—when he had given vent to the rage that racked his bosom, and laboured to burst forth like imprisoned lightening, I went with him a back way into the house, leaving him with my father and mother, and our other friends, whilst I stepped up to miss Abington's apartment.

I pro-

THE COTTAGE. III

I promised his grace, I would make an attempt to break the affair to her that very evening, but for an interview which he ardently requested, I knew not what to say, on a point so delicate and tender.

Her spirits and strength both so feeble, I have never thought it convenient for my mother to see her more than once; she does not know Sir Hugh, lady Melcombe or my brother, have been in the house—new faces to a person in her weak condition, are apt to cause flutterings, sometimes, disagreeable sensations.

When I entered her apartment, never having left it for so long a time,

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time, she appeared surprized, asking, in a plaintive voice, what had happened to rob her of my company? — I looked at Sarah and Alice, who were sitting by her bed, to leave the room, they both understanding my looks, left it immediately.

I will assure your ladyship, the language I spoke in is very necessary to be understood,—at first I found some difficulty to make the former comprehend my meaning, the poor old soul, no doubt from good motives, was for ever talking to miss Abington of sick people—of dead corps and burials.

As I approached the bed, where she generally lies half the day, she asked,

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asked, as I said before, what had kept me so long from her? A gentleman of my acquaintance, my dear miss Abington, I answered, who just called to ask how I did.

A gentleman of your acquaintance, she retorted, what must he think, miss Osborne, to see *you* in this little hovel? I replied, he asked no questions, that he was not one of the inquisitive sort.

God will bless you, miss Osborne, she replied, I daily see to what inconveniences I expose you.

I suffer no inconveniences, my dear miss Abington, if I did, I should be doubly repaid to see you getting strength.

IF

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If nothing but my recovery could repay my best friend, I have no hopes of getting out of her debt.

It is my opinion, miss Abington—you know I always told you it *was*—that *your* disorder is chiefly on the spirits.

Supposing, my dear miss Osborne, it should be so, what on this earth would remove the cause? I never heard physicians could discover a remedy for rooted grief.

Physicians, my dearest Jamima, (she says, she likes to be called Jamima, she entreats I would always call her so, I do comply with her request when I think of it)

Physicians

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Physicians are not skilled in the ways of providence, no more than we are, if they could tell what *would*, or what would *not* happen, many disorders would be prevented as well as many cured.

It is true, she replied, providence, that unsearchable power, can do every thing; it is consistent with our faith to think so; but then, my charming friend, we should not expect, or desire, it will be moved to do what *we* think best,—I perceive we are no judges for ourselves; I once thought the heavy disappointment I met with in Mr. D—, the death of my uncle Edward,—the death of lord and lady Modbrook,—the cruelty I received from my relations;—I
once

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once thought *those* heavy misfortunes, the worst that could befall me; now miss Osborne, I see with other eyes, I have a different understanding of things, what I *then* considered severe afflictions, at *this* moment I look on as peculiar blessings.

If I had married Mr. D—, I should have been surrounded with splendour;—if he had possessed the heart I flattered myself he did, I should have felt much when the hour came that I was to be separated from him;—*now* I have no tender *husband* to wet my pillow with his tears; *no* tender *relations*, to rend my heart in twain, when they are borne from me;—I have only *one* to part with,—only *one* left

left to weep over me; here she took my hand, and bore it to her quivering lips;—weep, yes, God knows, I wept;—I was obliged to quit the room, and run to my own apartment, or the agony she had worked me up to, must have terrified her out of her senses.

At my return, I found her just the same, resigned, mild, creature, as I left her;—not a tear,—not even the trace of one; what would I have given if the interview had been over! I feared it would be *too* much for her tender frame,—I apprehended she would have expired with the shock,—how much was I mistaken!—How greatly has her fortitude surprized me!

What

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What have you been crying, my dear miss Osborne, said she, as I advanced towards her? I thought you had been too much accustomed to such things, to shrink at them, I see how it is, whilst you endeavour at my tranquility, you are making yourself unhappy.

I told her, I should be the happiest creature on earth, if she did but wish to live, that by shewing an inclination to remain longer here, I should flatter myself she loved me.

So I do love you, miss Osborne, calling me to her, and she laid her hand on mine, whilst she repeated those words, the blest above can witness how much I love you,

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you, with my latest breath I will pant out your name, I pray to be your conductor to the abodes of blifs.

But suppose, my dear Jamima, willing to give a turn to this conversation, and wanting to introduce that which I so much desired, suppose your aunt and cousin should repent their black deeds, and sue for pardon.

What do you think, miss Osborne, I have not forgiven them? Yes, interrupting her, I know your merciful heart *too* well to suppose the contrary, but they might hear of your illness, and petition to see you.

Why

Why then I would not only see them, but I would thank them for their condescension; have you heard any thing from that quarter, miss Osborne, and she fixed her eyes on mine, as if she had been looking through me?

No, I answered,—no indeed, I have heard nothing from them, I only asked, supposing they should make it a request; for my part, I continued, a message from them, or from Mr. D—, would not much surprize me.

From Mr. D—, she returned,—from him, miss Osborne? Starting up in her bed, Oh! no—no—no, he will never think of seeing me again;—don't—pray don't let him
see

see me, recollecting herself, for I know what that moment occurred to her; I repeat, miss Osborne, I must not see him;—I am hurried—my head—do feel how my head beats.

Never till this moment, did I observe her to betray the least marks of impatience; but the cause for her impatience was too evident; before she left Collingwood house, it was rumoured, I had broke with the duke; his not coming to the cottage, and my never mentioning his name, confirmed this report; and, I suppose, from what I had just said, she thought there might be a possibility of the treaty's being renewed;—I was at

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a loss what to say next, yet resolved to proceed in my purpose.

Mr. D—, I replied, shall never see you contrary to your inclinations—don't be afraid, if he was to fall on his knees, without your consent he should not approach you.

But you do not know, miss Osborne, who it is I would avoid.—You will not know the person to be Mr. D—, supposing he should discover where I am, and be audacious enough to seek an interview with me.

Shall I tell you, my dear Jamma, what I conjecture? If I should guess the very person, will you
be

be frank, will you say I am right?—
 Help me from the bed, my dear
 miss Osborne, she hastily exclaim-
 ed;—I must have air, I find my
 life going off apace.

Bless me, how I trembled,—I
 thought I had killed her,—I knew
 not what to do;—if I called for
 help, I feared the duke would be
 alarmed;—I feared every thing;—
 I dreaded, lest in his frenzy, he
 might have rushed into her apart-
 ment.

The lord knows how I bore her
 to the window, or what I said or
 did, till she told me she found
 herself growing better, never more,
 said I, will I mention a subject
 that gives you pain;—I will avoid,

for the future, what—here she interrupted me; yes, if you would free me from dreadful uncertainty, you must be explicit;—you must say who the person is you suppose to be Mr. D—; but I believe, miss Osborne, sighing, you are too, too certain;—my last, my only friend, will—yes, looking at me with a piteous eye, you will soon, very soon, be torn from me; what is still worse than losing you, is the reflection, that without the knowledge of me, you might have been happy;—the fatal—the fatal secret, would it had remained imprisoned with my sorrows.

If instant death had stared me in the face, all must have out;—I could no longer restrain the torrent

rent of joy;—it rushed from my heart like waters long pent up; if you will live, my dear—my charming friend, in a voice trembling, slow and faltering, — if you will live, I repeat, you will see your Augusta happier than words can express — You will see the noble — the brave — the generous duke of Lester, blessed beyond human wishes.

Pale as the light of a wintry moon was her angelick face, when she looked on me, and pronounced these words, Now fate, thy work is compleat! — Now do I perceive — here she sunk back in her chair unable to proceed; — I was going to speak — seeing her mistake, I was in haste to undeceive her, but

she prevented me, by saying, stop miss Osborne, don't proceed, I am collecting strength to tell you how much I wish your happiness, and that of the person you are going to be united to, but don't wish me to live—I entreat you never more wish me to remain in misery.

Oh! my dear Jamima! throwing my arms about her neck,—say not so—Say not that you wish to die, live for us all—Live for your charming duke—He is yours,—he is not mine.—Oh! your vile—vile cousin! — Oh! your base dissembling aunt! — His grace, the best, the most deserving youth in the world, live for him, my Jamima; live to repay what he has suffered on your account;—live to—and I
was

was running on : What do you say my dear miss Osborne, her hands and eyes lifted up?—What is it you would have me understand!—Is the duke acquitted?—Can he—tell me—Oh, tell me! Can he acquit himself?

One moment, I returned,—only one moment, but speak not, my Jamima, I will tell you every thing;—I will relate, by what surprizing acts of providence this great discovery has been brought to light; saying this, I ran hastily to pour some drops into a glass of wine, which, after she had drank, I related every circumstance of this strange affair.

What sudden changes do a few moments produce!—How capricious is fortune! She smiles and frowns almost at the same instant; we become enraptured if we see her good humour, we soon forget her lowering brow, and as soon do we forget her smiles, when she assumes an angry look.—Oh, Fortune, fickle dame, for once be steady, continue to dart thy bright beam on my Jamima, and the dear lord of her heart.

Can I send your ladyship—can I paint, with my untaught pen, the tender scene I am just escaped from?—Oh, that I could picture her expressive eyes!—her pleased words,—her joyful perturbations,
—yet

—yet she must die, this angel must leave us.

A thousand and a thousand times did she thank me for the part I had taken in her happiness, at the same time asking, if his grace expressed a desire to see her;—a desire to see you, my sweet friend; I returned, yes, he would be completely miserable should you refuse to admit him to your presence.

Refuse to admit him, my dear miss Osborne, so far from refusing it, I should feel severe pangs at leaving this life, without first assuring his grace, my most ardent prayers are sent up for him.

G 5

Well

Well then, my dear Jamima, do see him this evening, you may as well see him now as to-morrow; you may suppose what a night he will have if—Well, well, my dearest friend, she returned, before I had finished what I was about to say,—let him come up immediately,—tell him his presence will afford me higher satisfaction than it would have done the morning of that day, when all my hopes were blasted; but first, my dear miss Osborne, rising from her seat, let me endeavour to hide, from his penetrating eye, the vast ravages, trouble and sickness, have made on this poor form; here she began to examine her emaciated figure in a glass that was placed opposite, and which, till then, appeared useless; first she looked at her face, then her

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her neck, then her hands and arms, tell me, my dear creature, as I stood by her, if you think my shocking appearance will not affect his grace too deeply? Was I to make him more unhappy than he is already, to what purpose should I see him?

I believed, I said, her person had suffered but little since he saw her at Bristol, and for my part, I saw nothing shocking in thin people.

If you think so, miss Osborne, smiling, you may shew him up, I sha'n't be hurried; she perceived, I believe, my apprehensions; but stop, recollecting herself, I will first draw on a thicker pair of gloves, and pull my hood over the sides of my face, this done, I helped her back to her seat, and speeded down to his grace.

I suppose he heard me coming for he ran to the foot of the stairs before I could reach it, eagerly enquiring for his Jamima? All but her valuable health, my lord duke, I believe I fighed deep, all but her valuable health is as you can wish, I am come to fetch you—

What am I *still* dear to her, he exclaimed? May I *still* hope to call her mine? Your grace is still dear to her, I replied, but whether you will call her your's is a point no earthly creature can determine. For heaven's sake, miss Osborne, I talk to me at least of happiness,—the sound—the comfortable sound—is balm to my tortured mind,—I staid not to reply, but beckoning him to follow me, I led him to the door of her apartment, there he stopped,—there he appeared to be riveted;

riveted ; Seeing he looked as if he knew not what he did, or where he was, I gently opened the door, pronouncing as I entered, The duke, my dear miss Abington, — scarce had the words escaped me, when I saw him at her feet.

Good God, such a sight!—Oh lady Susan, what melancholy ideas struck to my heart, when she spoke,—when she wept,—when she entreated him to rise, — Oh the smile that she welcomed him with, —Oh the poor wasted hand that she held out to meet his.

I leaned on the window bench, my trembling legs could no longer support me, I can't express how I

was

was affected, when I saw both her hands pressed in his, the manly tear stealing down his pale cheek ; — she mentioned something of her cruel relations, shook her head, then looked at him, as if she would have said, See what happiness they have cut off, — he turned from her, wiped away the forbidden tears, and clasping her to his bosom, cried, *Now*, my love, *now* my Jammima, we shall be for ever happy, speak not of your unworthy relations, — mention them not, my dearest dear life, till your spirits are better.

Oh, she replied, I could forgive them every thing but their treachery to your grace, for myself that is *now* of little import ; — see-
ing

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ing him bursting with grief, in a soothing accent she entreated, he would be resigned, that whilst she lived she would endeavour to make him happy.

Will you promise, my soul's treasure, will you promise to try to live? — Will you only tell me you wish to live?

My lord duke, I will not only *tell* you I wish to live,—but from this hour I will *pray* to live,—it is only for your grace I *wish* to live, Oh I will entreat, I *will* lift up my poor heart to the throne of mercy, my dearest miss Osborne joins, I know, in this ardent request, I know she will pray for *me*, morning, noon and night; — I ask not
your

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your grace to join in the petition, I see you already join; and she bowed her head towards him, whilst the tears fell on his motionless hand.

Will my dearest life, said he, suffer me to be often with her?— Will you suffer me to find admittance, lifting her hand gently to his lips as if he only meant to warm it with his breath? You could not, my dear angel, I know your tender heart could not bear to have me watch, and weep, and wail, whole hours at the door of your chamber.

Whilst I retain my senses,— whilst my humane friend can support the scene, your grace I sacredly protest, shall find admittance.

I

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I know not what I did, or what I said; never was a poor creature so distressed,—sometimes I walked up and down the room,—sometimes I was so choaked with tears that I could not utter a syllable, I believe I joined their hands twenty times, then I would run and kiss miss Abington,—then entreat the duke to go down.

Oh lady Susan, a feeling heart is both a blessing and a misfortune. I know not how I tore him from her; but had he remained much longer, I believe the scene would have been still more tragic.

At parting, when he again pressed her hand to his lips, calling down heaven's choicest blessings on her head,

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head,—in a low voice, scarce intelligible, she warned him to avoid revenge; I know not what he answered,—I stood with the door in my hand, praying he would leave the room.

Poor Isaac and Sarah are like people thunder-struck;—the good old man came to me just now to know what he should do, for, he said, He did not think it became him to stay under the roof with such great gentlefolks; madam, said he, the new comer must be very great indeed, I never see a star out of the element, 'till I see'd it in his side.

His grace has confessed to me, that when he saw miss Abington
at

at Windsor, he was excessively struck with the alteration in her person, but that his attachment to *me*, and the part, he supposed, *she* had acted, damped every spark of his former passion, nor would it, he declared, ever have been revived, if he had not accidentally met her again at the rooms at Bristol.

How very kind is providence in this affair!—As a friend, I can admire;—I can revere,—I can love him;—but as a husband, I could not give him the preference he merits.

I long for another letter from your ladyship, I hope that will bring me an account of the much
wished

wished for day. — Sir Hugh and lady Melcombe entreat the honour of your company at their house, that is, the hours when your ladyship cannot make it either convenient or agreeable in our little cottage. — His grace proposes going every evening to Shafto place, and returning here by the hour we breakfast.

Adieu, my dear lady;—my brother presents his most respectful compliments, — I am happy his scheme of going abroad is at an end;—it was from him, I find, his grace first learnt miss Abington's danger, and the place of her abode.

Once

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Once more, my dear lady, adieu:
With all respect, with all affection,
I have the honour to be,

Your ladyship's obliged,

humble servant,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

LETTER XIX.

From the same to the same.

The Cottage.

THREE weeks longer, what a visit!—I wish Mr. and Mrs. Vernon knew how much we want your ladyship here.

Since I last wrote, my time has been so much taken up, that, 'till this morning, I could not steal one moment to myself.

We have had two eminent physicians from London;—there has been a consultation with them and doctor H—;—his grace told them
her

her whole history ; he thought it necessary, How else, he said, could they properly judge of her disorder ?—I wish the gentlemen of the faculty would forbear shaking their heads, I am sure they make my heart shake, every time I look up at them ;—yet we have hopes,—they all tell us, now they know her uncommon afflictions, there is a possibility of her recovery.

His grace, who stood watching for their words, before they could find utterance, exclaimed, You know not, gentlemen, the felicity you have bestowed, — you have lifted me from the brink of despair to the boundless height of joy.

The

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The senior, stepping forward, assured him, nothing should be wanting in them to compleat his happiness,—that they would exert all their skill, he said, they would be indefatigable in their attendance, and watch the effect of every medicine; but, continued he, with a kind of shrug, we cannot answer for events.

Talk to me not of events, replied his grace, you must flatter me, gentlemen, even if you saw no hope; I could not live to hear it pronounced.

No hope, returned the gentleman who before addressed him, we do not tell your grace we have no hope, very far from saying it, we think

think there is great room for hope; — joy again was to be seen in every feature of his grace, — again he thanked the gentlemen, — and again renewed a thousand promises of friendship. — The London physicians, at their taking leave, had each a purse of five hundred guineas presented them by the duke, Doctor H — a purse of two hundred.

I have been told, before we are attacked by any heavy misfortune, it is not uncommon to feel a heaviness at the heart, that it seems to be informed of what is to follow; consequently, opposite sensations must bode something opposite to misfortune. — In my life, though

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H

my

my mind and body suffer continual fatigues, did I ever feel such ease! — Such tranquility as I this morning awoke with! — Why, lady Susan, I have spirits to scold; — perhaps, your ladyship will say, Can you scold? — Yes, indeed, I can; and that your ladyship would acknowledge, was you to see me with the duke: — sometimes, he leaves the room in tears, I run and fetch him back; — at others, he sits with his watch counting the moments when miss Abington is to take her draughts, — then her gruels are too thick, then too thin; — frequently fancies, she is growing faint, and alarms her by his fears. — I see the dear soul often smile at our bickerings. — But here he comes, tapping at my door; One moment
and

and your grace may command me:—his delicacy I admire,—he never ventures near her apartment, unless I am with him.

My Brother is just sat out for Nut-hill; he writes lord Portland by this post,—he is rejoiced at the near prospect of seeing him, the day once fixed, he intends to meet his lordship and his amiable sister thirty miles short of London; after conducting your ladyship here, he will return to Nut-hill with lord Portland; this place can afford no entertainment for young men, the duke excepted, I believe his grace had rather remain under this humble roof, than partake of all the splendour Europe can afford.

Yours truly I

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—I write no more, I hear him
returning with impatient steps,

Yours, &c.

my dear lady,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

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LETTER XX.

The Duke of LESTER to FRANCIS
OSBORNE, Esq;

JUST arrived on the borders of
—— shire;—not in bed since I
saw you,—what care I for fatigue,
I feel nothing but for my angel.
Good heaven! how could I support
it?—My fate hung on a poor slender
thread, so slender, that I feared
to breathe, lest a sigh would
have separated it;—every ray of
hope shut out,—not a look,—not
even a consolatory look could I get
from one soul about her.

To-morrow

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To-morrow I enter the doors of her cursed relations, yet have I promised not to stain my sword in the villain's black dastardly heart, but I will brandish it to the coward—by heaven, I will harrow up his soul, if it is not sunk to its native dungeon.

What happiness now awaits us? Every moment I see it advancing, —advancing, do I say? Why it is here already; — lady Susan brings it in her smiles, — your charming sister, proclaims it in her mild intelligent eye.—My Jamima lives for me, yes, Frank, she is stepped back from her sister angels to receive my vows. — Portland, Osborne, and Lester, three favourites

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yourites of fortune; not unlikely, I think, but, in after ages, this may be the title of some book, in which, perhaps, the story of our loves will be recited.

Where are you, my friends?—
My dear, my amiable friends,—are you at Shafto place?—At Nut-hill?—Or with my divine Jamima in old Isaac's cottage?—How much I wish to see his honest countenance;—my dear old couple, your virtues shall not go unrewarded,—they shall no longer be concealed;—the proud peer will acknowledge, an humble cottager can outvie him in riches, such riches, as neither birth, title nor interest can procure.

Kiss

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Kiss the fair hand of my Jamima;—say, I have wrote her a few lines in every town through which I have passed.—I have done with compliments,—take for yourself, and the friendly circle, all my heart has to offer.

Your's, &c. &c.



LESTER.

The End of the Second Volume.

